

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 8643

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BE, CG

SUBJECT: BELGIAN-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS: RESUMPTION OF MINISTERIAL
MEETINGS

REF: BRUSSELS 8554

1. SUMMARY. MISUNDERSTANDING WHICH AROSE BETWEEN BELGIUM
AND ZAIRE OVER POSSIBLE RESUMPTION OF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS
APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CLEARED UP FOLLOWING BELGIAN
STATEMENTS TACITLY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT MOBUTU DID NOT
SOLICIT RESUMPTION. WEEKLY "SPECIAL" DIRECTOR DAVISTER
VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED FOREIGN MINISTRY FOR ITS HALDING
OF AFFAIR AND CALLED FOR OUSTER OF FOREIGN MINISTER
VAN ELSLANDE. FORMER PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON PUBLICLY
DEFENDED HIS INITIATIVE IN APPROACHING MOBUTU ON
MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AND CRITICIZED YOUNG SOCIALISTS
FOR OPPOSING MPR ATTENDANCE AT SOCIALIST CONGRESS.
END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER FLAP WHICH DEVELOPED LAST WEEK OVER FORMER
PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON'S INITIATIVE TO SEEK RESUMPTION
OF BI-ANNUAL BELGIAN-ZAIRIAN MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, BELGIAN
FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS TAKEN STEPS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE ATMOSPHERE.
MOST RECENTLY, FOREIGN MINISTRY PRESS SPOKESMAN SAID ON
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NOVEMBER 6 THAT GOB IS OPEN TO RESUMING DIALOGUE WITH

ZAIRE MORE FORMALLY AFTER DISCREET CONTACTS WHICH HAD BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN WAKE OF CHOME AFFAIR. SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS FOLLOWED FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE WHICH HAD BEEN ISSUED NOVEMBER 2 BUT OVERLOOKED BY PRESS DURING LONG HOLIDAY WEEKEND. THAT COMMUNIQUE WAS RELEASED AS RESPONSE TO ZAIRIAN OBJECTIONS, VOICED BY AZAP, TO GOB'S REFERENCE OCTOBER 30 TO MOBUTU'S "DESIRE" TO RESUME MINISTERIAL MEETINGS WITH BELGIUM. SECOND COMMUNIQUE NOTED INSTEAD THAT REPORTS OF MOBUTU'S "AGREEMENT" TO RESUME MINISTERIAL MEETINGS HAD BEEN RECEIVED FAVORABLY IN BRUSSELS, THAT NEWS CORRESPONDED WITH OBJECTIVES BELGIAN AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN PURSUING IN CONTACTS WITH MOBUTU, AND THAT AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO REQUEST APPOINTMENT WITH MOBUTU TO "CONCRETIZE WILL OF TWO PARTIES TO RENEW DIALOGUE."

3. FOREIGN MINISTRY DESK OFFICER FOR ZAIRE, JAENEN, TOLD US NOVEMBER 6 THAT NOVEMBER 2 COMMUNIQUE HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO CORRECT MISUNDERSTANDINGS CREATED BY OCTOBER 30 REFERENCE TO MOBUTU'S "DESIRE" TO RESUME MEETINGS. JAENEN SAID AMBASSADOR KERREMANS HAD SHOWN SECOND COMMUNIQUE TO ZAIRIAN OFFICIALS, WHO INDICATED THAT NEE WORDING ACCEPTABLE. BELGIANS ARE NOW AWAITING MEETING BETWEEN AMBASSADOR KERREMANS AND MOBUTU TO PREPARE WAY FOR EVENTUAL RESUMPTION OF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. FOREIGN MINISTRY STILL PREFERS THAT INITIAL TALKS TAKE PLACE AT TECHNICAL LEVEL BEFORE MINISTERS MEET.

4. IN COMMENTARY FILED FROM KINSHASA IN NOVEMBER 6 ISSUE OF "SPECIAL" PIERRE DAVISTER ALSO INDICATES PROBLEMS WHICH AROSE LAST WEEK OVER MINISTERIAL MEETINGS HAVE BEEN SORTED OUT FOLLOWING CORRECTION OF WHAT HE CALLS BELGIAN "GAFFE" IN OCTOBER 30 COMMUNIQUE. DAVISTER EMPHASIZES THAT INITIATIVE FOR RESUMPTION OF MEETINGS CAME FROM BELGIAN, NOT ZAIRIAN, SIDE. HE ALSO USES INCIDENT AS BASIS FOR CASTIGATING ALLEGED INEFFECTIVENESS OF FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE. DAVISTER URGES PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS TO GET RID OF VAN ELSLANDE, ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTER HAS BEEN ON EXTENDED TRIP

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OUTSIDE COUNTRY WITH KING AND QUEEN SINCE LONG BEFORE MISUNDERSTANDING WITH ZAIRE BEGAN. SOURCE CLOSE TO TINDEMANS, INCIDENTALLY, HAS INFORMED US THAT PRIME MINISTER HAS TAKEN A RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD WHOLE AFFAIR AND WAS NOT BOTHERED BY LEBURTON'S FORAY INTO "PARALLEL DIPLOMACY."

5. FOLLOWING HIS RETURN TO BELGIUM NOVEMBER 3, LEBURTON DEFENDED HIS ROLE AS SELF-APPOINTED EMISSARY IN ARTICLE

IN SOCIALIST DAILY, LE PEUPLE, SAYING THAT "IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO BE IN THE GOVERNMENT TO HAVE EXTERNAL RELATIONS." LEBURTON ALSO CRITICIZED THOSE WHO JUDGE SUCH COUNTRIES AS ZAIRE BY STANDARDS OF WESTERN DEMOCRACY, AND TOOK YOUNG SOCIALISTS TO TASK FOR THEIR OPPOSITION TO MPR ATTENDANCE AT SOCIALIST DOCTRINAL CONGRESS. ZAIRE, HE POINTED OUT, HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES OF BOTH EAST AND WEST, INCLUDING CHINA AND SOVIET UNION, AND MOBUTU IS CHAMPION OF ANTI-COLONIALISM. LEBURTON ALSO NOTED CONTINUED IMPORTANCE FOR BELGIUM OF GOOD COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE.

6. GOB'S DENIAL OF REPORTS THAT FORMER ZAIRIAN OPPOSITION LEADER GIZENGA IS IN BELGIUM REPORTED SEPTEL. FIRESTONE

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